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General Assembly
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Official Records

17th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 7.55 p.m.

High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Agenda item 67 (*continued*)

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

(b) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear a presentation by His Excellency The Right Honourable Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland and co-Chair of round table 1, who will present summaries of the discussions in the two round tables.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): I am pleased to present to the General Assembly today the summary of the fruitful discussion that was held today during the two round tables on the theme of "Victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: recognition, justice and development".

The first round table was co-chaired by me and by His Excellency Mr. Arvin Boolell, GOSK, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius. The second round table was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Mouldi Kefi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, and His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Bucio, President of the National Council to Prevent Discrimination of Mexico.

The following experts made presentations during the round tables: Mr. Anwar Kemal, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Ms. Edna Maria Santos Roland, member of the group of independent eminent experts on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Siad Douale, Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; and Ms. Verene Shepherd, member of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

The participation and engagement of representatives of civil society during the discussions was greatly appreciated. During the discussions, many speakers pointed out that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, together with the outcome document of the 2009 Durban Review Conference, provide a very comprehensive and solid framework for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Today there are still millions of victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance around the world. Victims do not have access, for example, to education, employment and housing. Migrants and refugees are mistreated just for being different. The Internet is used to disseminate racist ideas among youth, and such sites promoting

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racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should be eliminated.

It was noted that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action provides useful guidance to Governments, non-governmental organizations and other institutions in their efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, it is important to ensure its implementation.

The importance of the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which was focused on the needs of vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, immigrants, migrant workers, Afro-descendants, Roma and other minorities, was emphasized.

It was stated that in 2001, the international community focused, for the first time, on victims, including people of African descent, indigenous peoples, and people of Asian descent, Roma, migrants, refugees, displaced people, asylum-seekers, national and religious minorities, women, youth and children and victims of trafficking.

The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance acknowledged that slavery and the slave trade were crimes against humanity, and also included a gender perspective.

Policies are being developed in many countries in the areas of education, health, labour, access to land and housing. Despite achievements, serious problems remain worldwide. The misuse of technologies to disseminate hate and racist ideas is one example. The need for data collection was highlighted and an appeal for the proclamation of a United Nations decade for People of African descent was made.

Many speakers reaffirmed the importance of the need for commitment and political will to realize human rights for all without discrimination. Speakers also welcomed the adoption by consensus of the political declaration — the outcome of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (resolution 66/3).

Speakers also stated that the theme of this event rightfully focused on victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the need for their recognition and access to justice. A speaker noted that achieving justice is often the first step towards achieving equality. Some speakers also stated that the global response to racism should not be clouded by politics and that it is an obligation and responsibility for the international community — including civil society — to collectively work together to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

They also referred to measures taken at the national level, including legislation, policies, specialized institutions and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The importance of human rights education, awareness-raising campaigns, continued dialogue on anti-discrimination issues, including interreligious dialogue, and cooperation with civil society was noted by a number of speakers.

The importance of the media to promote a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity was also noted. The fight against racism should not be used to curtail or limit other rights and should not be an excuse for repression. The need to share best practices and to provide targeted technical assistance, including with the support of the United Nations, in the area of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was emphasized by speakers.

The importance of fighting poverty, particularly as articulated in the Millennium Development Goals, was stated. The need to integrate the right to development in anti-discrimination efforts was also stated, as was the importance of a human rights-based approach for sustainable development.

Prominent in the discussion was the issue of discrimination against migrants. It was stated that migrants experienced racial abuse, xenophobia, discriminatory labour practices, harsh living conditions, and trafficking, for example. Concern was expressed in various statements about the situation of groups in vulnerable situations, such as women, children, refugees and indigenous peoples. Concern was also expressed with respect to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The issue of discrimination against religious minorities and the need to foster harmony and peaceful

coexistence of different religions in societies were emphasized. The rise of right-wing or nationalist movements, xenophobic statements by politicians and other public figures and the dissemination of such sentiments were highlighted as another important area of concern. Several speakers referred to people under foreign occupation and the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The importance of not singling out a specific region or country was also emphasized.

It was noted that progress had been made but that gaps persisted. It was emphasized that countering discrimination is a global issue that needs to be tackled by joint efforts. The importance of economic, social and cultural rights for the lives of victims was also noted.

It was also emphasized that in order to guarantee the right against discrimination within a society, the creation and strengthening of specialized national bodies, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, is fundamental. This requires that specialized organizations have a broad legal mandate, funds and appropriate infrastructure that would allow them to effectively promote equal opportunities and treatment among persons of different societal groups. It was stressed that today's work should help us reflect on the necessity of establishing specialized national bodies in the fight against racial discrimination, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance.

The need to apologize and to provide reparations to victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade was highlighted, as was the recommendation to establish a permanent forum for Africans and people of African descent. The proposal to erect a memorial for the victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade was welcomed by several speakers.

A speaker encouraged Member States to provide innovative and effective reparations, including resources to support social programmes to assist people of African descent. Monitoring of acts of racist discrimination is important in order to prevent further abuses.

It was further emphasized that the theme of the event accurately reflected the essence of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It was also noted that the Political Declaration adopted during this commemorative event will bolster the morale of the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance around the world. Countering the mainstreaming of hate speech was defined as imperative in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

A number of speakers expressed appreciation for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the leadership of the High Commissioner in the domain of anti-discrimination efforts. Many speakers noted that States should continue to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and called for both national and regional processes to be strengthened. They also called for reinvigorated political will.

The tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action represents for many an opportunity to scale up their efforts and to exchange ideas on how to prevent racism and discrimination and share good practices. Several speakers emphasized that the tenth anniversary coincided with the International Year for People of African Descent. In that respect, some suggested that a decade for people of African descent be proclaimed in 2012. Some called for establishing a permanent forum and others called for proclaiming an international day for people of African descent.

A number of speakers also expressed concern about the trend of incitement to hatred. A number of speakers emphasized that an effective system of protection requires improved coordination among human rights mechanisms. There is a also a need to enhance the performance of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action follow-up mechanisms and to ensure commensurate funding for their activities.

Several speakers underscored the primary responsibility of States for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. They also stated that institutional changes and affirmative action had been implemented to improve the lives of victims and groups in vulnerable situations. Still, a lot remains to be done. The importance of countering corruption and ensuring the rule of law was further emphasized.

Today's discussion was thoughtful, constructive and forward-looking. Hopefully this commemoration will not remain mere rhetoric and we will all move together towards practical actions. Indeed, as stated in the Political Declaration that we adopted by consensus this morning, we shall

> "Proclaim together our strong determination to make the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the protection of the victims thereof, a high priority for our countries." (*resolution 66/3, para. 12*)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): As we draw to a close this High-level Meeting to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone here for coming together to reaffirm our collective commitment to prevent, combat and eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

I would also like to express once more my heartfelt gratitude to the co-facilitators, Ms. Isabelle Picco, Permanent Representative of Monaco, and Mr. Michel Tommo Monthe, Permanent Representative of Cameroon, for their exceptional leadership throughout the preparations for the High-level Meeting. Let me also take this opportunity to sincerely thank the co-Chairs and all of the participants in today's meeting. I commend the peace-loving Member States that supported this process and worked together to address this serious global challenge.

Today we have heard about the important work being done worldwide to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. We have also heard about efforts to make progress towards realizing the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination, in accordance with international human rights law and the relevant instruments.

Unfortunately, we have also heard that, despite concerted efforts, racist attitudes and racial discrimination continue to perpetrate deeply embedded social and economic disparities.

That rising inequality and discrimination make the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the commitments in the Political Declaration that we adopted this morning (resolution 66/3) even more urgent. It is vital that we go further to implement measures to counter intolerance and eradicate advocacy of hatred, incitement and discrimination. It is vital that we do our utmost to promote and strengthen effective dialogue, which in turn increases understanding within and among communities and promotes social cohesion. It is vital that we unite in our efforts and collaborate more intensively in order to effectively combat racism and other forms of discrimination.

I firmly believe that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are essential for social harmony, for the promotion of good governance and the rule of law, for sustainable development and for the fair allocation of resources. It is therefore crucial for the dignity and development of the world's population that we continue to fight the scourge of racism.

I urge everyone here to continue to speak with one voice, to unite in our efforts and to collaborate more intensively, in order to combat racism and to make the world a safer, more harmonious place for all.

(*spoke in English*)

The High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is now concluded.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 67.

The meeting rose at 8.20 p.m.